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Cover Page Footnote
Thanks to the College of Liberal Arts for the Writing Retreat that created space for Ted to contribute to this manuscript. Thanks, too, to the students and teacher candidates whose work we have quoted.

Reframing Responses to Student Writing: Promising Young Writers and the Writing Pedagogies Course

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Recent research (Beach and Friedrich 2008; Graham and Perrin 2007) has suggested that writing instruction can affect secondary school students' success in college and in the workplace. An essential component of this instruction is how teachers evaluate and respond to student writing. However, while teacher candidates in English teaching methods courses sometimes have opportunities to practice designing writing assignments (e.g., Smagorinsky and Whiting 1995), they often have few opportunities to practice evaluating and responding to the writing of actual students. Moreover, Sommers (2006) describes the challenges in offering feedback that can successfully promote collaboration between teacher and writing student, as well as the level of engagement necessary for students to act as partners with their teachers in their own development. Research remains to be done on how to provide opportunities for teacher candidates to practice responding to student writing in ways that both challenge their assumptions about their roles as teachers and help them to connect theory to practice. In this article, we begin this inquiry by describing our attempts to provide such an opportunity in a university writing pedagogies course for teacher candidates and creative writing students. This opportunity arose from our efforts to pilot a revision to a longstanding National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) program for middle school writers, called Promising Young Writers (for which we both serve on the national committee), by including opportunities for the middle school student participants in that contest to receive formative feedback on the writing they submitted from college students enrolled in Ted's writing pedagogies course. Because the course included not only teacher candidates, but also students from our university's creative writing program, the conversation about how to evaluate and respond to the middle schoolers' writing provided valuable opportunities to surface and discuss assumptions about the teacher's role and the nature of feedback in responding to student writing.

Below, we first provide background about prior research into teacher feedback on student writing and then offer a framework that responds to this prior research. This framework informed our piloted revision of the Promising Young Writers program, as well as the portion of that revision that involved having the writing pedagogies course students evaluate and respond to the middle schoolers' writing. In particular, we analyze the evaluations of the middle schoolers' writing made by the college students (teacher candidates and creative writers) and the eventual feedback they provided, with an eye to what this feedback revealed about not only their assumptions about responding to student writing, but also the difficulty many had putting into practice the theory they were exploring in the writing pedagogies class. We conclude with reflections on how this analysis informs prior research on English writing teacher education.

Background

According to national studies, many secondary students are not prepared for the demands of writing in college (ACT, 2005) or the workplace (Achieve, Inc. 2005). A 2007 Carnegie Corporation report and meta-analysis has suggested that effective writing instruction in secondary schools can impact students' success in school and beyond (Graham and Perin 2007). In particular, teacher feedback on student writing can affect whether and how students make substantive revisions to their writing during the composing process, which involve not only surface level changes but also rethinking the content (Beach and Friedrich 2008). However, because English teaching methods courses are often separated from field experiences in local secondary schools (Smagorinsky and Whiting 1995), they may provide few opportunities for teacher candidates to practice this important skill.

We do not mean to suggest that English teaching methods courses ignore the importance of responsive writing instruction. Indeed, we acknowledge that English teaching methods courses, in general, and writing pedagogies courses in particular, often address the design of writing assignments and rubrics; this approach is supported by a long tradition of research which has demonstrated that teachers' design and implementation of assignments shapes the written work students produce (Freedman, 1987), and that successful writing teachers identify patterns in student writing to address in subsequent lesson plans (Newell, 2008). Moreover, one recent study of writing methods courses in Ohio (Tulley 2013) indicated that 70.6 % of such courses address strategies for commenting on student writing; however, the same study also found that only 58.7% of writing methods courses included application of feedback strategies to field experiences[1]. This disparity suggests that in many such courses, discussion of response to student work happens only in the abstract, without reference to the writing of actual students.

1 Tulley's (2013) analysis of survey results does not provide details about what this application entailed, nor is the survey instrument included as an appendix. We can imagine a variety of possibilities that might or might not "count" in the eyes of survey respondents, including feedback on samples of student writing not associated with local field placements. Nevertheless, we believe these percentages point to a significant lack of opportunities to apply feedback strategies to actual student writing in writing pedagogies courses.

There are many reasons why opportunities for teacher candidates to practice responding to the writing of actual students might be valuable to provide. Prior research has suggested that teacher feedback depends on the teacher's conception of students as represented by their writing (Murphy and Yancey 2008; Taylor 2002). Discussion of commenting strategies and their potential effects, in the abstract, does not easily allow this aspect of giving feedback to be addressed. Opportunities to respond to the writing of actual students may thus provide valuable opportunities to surface assumptions about student writers, and to practice avoiding detrimental feedback, such as teacher comments based on stereotypes about students' language use associated with race (Ball 2009), gender (Haswell and Haswell 2009) and class (Seitz 2004).

However, a practical obstacle to providing opportunities for teacher candidates to give feedback on student writing concerns the nature of the students who enroll in a writing pedagogies course. At our university (as at many others), the writing pedagogies course is open not only to students majoring in English education, but also to those studying creative writing or professional writing. For these students, readings from English education and discussion of practical strategies for giving feedback on student writing may be less relevant than readings and discussion that address composition theory; indeed, much research has described the tension between these two strands of such a course (e.g., Alsup 2001; Bush 2002). From an instructor's standpoint, the presence of other students besides English education majors in the writing pedagogies course makes it especially difficult to create opportunities for field experiences in local schools where feedback strategies might be applied. However, a potential benefit of the dual audience for the course is that creative writing and professional writing students may bring different perspectives than teacher candidates to discussions of key course issues. Research has suggested that teachers' conceptions of writing shape their feedback on student work (Fitzgerald 1992); non-education majors may have different perspectives on what makes good writing (and good feedback on writing), if only opportunities can be created to enable discussion of these different perspectives.

In short, despite the importance of teacher feedback on student writing to secondary students' success in college and beyond, writing pedagogies courses (though they may include opportunities to discuss commenting strategies) may provide relatively few opportunities to practice giving feedback on writing to actual students and thus to surface assumptions about writers, writing, and the teacher's role in responding to them.

Theoretical Framework

Given our particular interest in how opportunities to practice teacher feedback on student writing might surface assumptions about students, about writing, and about the roles, relationships, and responses available to teacher candidates, we elaborate below a framework that addresses how participants in social interactions come to understand the nature of those interactions, and how to take part in them.

This framework is informed by a basic assumption that has long been held by composition theorists (e.g., Lucas 1987; Gottschalk 2003): that interactions around writing (such as those in which a teacher writes feedback to a student writer) are socioculturally and historically situated activities. Although each interaction is dynamic and different in terms of its embeddedness in place and time, participants naturally draw on their experiences with other, similar kinds of situations to formulate a definition of the interaction; this definition is called "the interactional frame" (Bateson 1972; Goffman 1986). The frame shapes and is shaped by participants' sense of their roles in an interaction and what is possible and appropriate to say or do. Over time, such frames become more established, determining the possibilities for participation. In order to change their sense of the roles, relationships, and responses available in such situations, participants need experiences that redefine or "reframe" the nature of the interaction.

The concept of the interactional frame helps to explain stories like the one related by Lad Tobin (2001) in his chapter "Process Pedagogy," from *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* (a text used in Ted's writing pedagogies course). Tobin admits that when he first taught writing (despite the fact that, as a student, he had found his own experience with writing instruction "exceptionally uninspiring"), the courses he taught were much like the ones he had experienced (2). In our terms, Tobin's past experiences as a student, despite his lack of enthusiasm for them, had contributed to an interactional frame for writing instruction that shaped his future interactions as a teacher. Like Tobin, many of our teacher candidates approach writing instruction based on their own experiences as students. Although many have experienced having their most important ideas seemingly ignored while their lexical mistakes received significant attention, those same prior experiences can strongly influence teacher candidates' feedback practices. As a result, when faced with students' texts for the first time, many teacher candidates fall into the types of responses they themselves have described as particularly unhelpful. In short, prior experiences as a student can frame writing instruction in powerful ways, defining the roles, relationships, and responses available to one as a teacher.

Tobin claims that upon discovering process pedagogy through scholars like Donald Murray and Peter Elbow, he learned to think of his students as "*real writers*" (2) rather than just students. But whereas Tobin began with students and instructional practices, and then encountered composition theory, we believe our students need opportunities to connect the theories they have read about to teaching practices via experiences with 'real writers' in order to frame what is possible and appropriate.

Methodology

The idea of reframing writing instruction by providing experiences with authentic audiences in a community of writers informed not only our work with teacher candidates in the writing pedagogies course, but also our redesign of the Promising Young Writers program, for which Mike serves as chair of the national committee. In this section, we describe our pilot of that

revision, focusing in particular on the part of the process that involved college students in Ted's writing pedagogies course as respondents to the writing submitted by middle schoolers to this contest.

Since the 1980s, the Promising Young Writers program has each year offered middle school teachers the chance to nominate eighth grade students who then submit two pieces (one written to a themed prompt, and the other of their own choosing) to be judged by a selection committee of teachers from across the country. At present, each year's winners are nationally recognized on NCTE's website. However, participation in the program has declined. As members of the committee charged with conducting the Promising Young Writers program (and as colleagues at the same university), we set out to revise the program, enlisting the help of middle school students and their teachers in Michigan and Pennsylvania (both longtime mentor teachers and collaborators with Mike) to help us pilot this revision.

Our thinking about reframing writing instruction by creating an authentic audience prompted us to make several changes to the original Promising Young Writers contest in our pilot. Whereas the program has typically invited teachers to submit their students' work for review by a panel of invited judges, we created an online wikispace where students could post their submissions themselves. In addition to simplifying the submission process for our busy teacher collaborators, we thought situating the action in an online space would distinguish participation in the program from students' experiences with school writing assignments (e.g., Pascopella and Richardson 2009). Indeed, we hoped to foster the feeling that students were participating in an online community of writers (like, for example, http://youthvoices.net/). In this way, we also sought to create an authentic audience for the work students would produce, something encouraged by NCTE's standards (2012) and position statements (e.g. NCTE 1991, NCTE 2008), and that we know from experience often creates more incentive than the prospect of writing for a teacher (or an anonymous judge).

We envisioned three rounds of judging, each by a different audience, for whom student writers would need to revise their submissions. First, students would submit their writing to the wikispace for other middle school writers (outside of their home state) to read, respond to, and vote for; those who received the most votes would move to round two. Next, students would revise the same piece for judging by college students in the writing pedagogies course at our university; it is on this second round of the pilot revision to the program that we focus in what follows. Finally, the writers ranked most highly from round two would revise their submission again in preparation for a response in round three by a famous (published) author familiar with the medium/genre each finalist had chosen, who would then select the winners.

Our changes to the platform and process in an effort to reframe school writing for the middle school students seemed to be relatively effective at inviting a variety of participation. More than 70 students in six classes across the two states expressed initial interest in submitting writing, and each had a personal page on the wiki for his/her work. Although only 23 students posted writing to their personal pages by the first round deadline, we were pleased overall with the quality and the personal investment apparent in the work these writers had produced, as well as the variety of genres students submitted: the entries included memoir, historical fiction, romance, science fiction, crime/thriller, sports stories, essays, and poems.

The second round of judging by college students in the writing pedagogies course that is the focus of our analysis occurred late in the semester, after the class had read and in many cases responded positively to landmark essays from Nancy Sommers, Richard Fulkerson, Peter Elbow, Joseph Harris, Donald Barthelme, Rebecca Moore Howard[2] and other composition theorists as well as the "Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing" and several of NCTE's position statements. The original plan was for Ted's students to choose five middle schoolers' submissions from each state to send to the final judge, and also have each group from the writing pedagogies class respond through the wiki to several writers so that each middle schooler received feedback from two groups of college students.

The college students first read and ranked the middle schoolers' drafts independently, and then met in groups of three to determine rankings as a group. Then, the groups who ranked the Pennsylvania middle schoolers met in one half of the room to agree on rankings for those students, and the other groups discussed the Michigan students' rankings. As it happened, though, on the day the groups were assigned to rank either the Michigan or the Pennsylvania students, nearly all of the creative writing and professional writing majors were inadvertently assigned to the Michigan writers while nearly all of the future teachers were assigned to rank the Pennsylvania students. Based on issues that arose from the initial scores and responses of these two groups, Ted had them switch: the teacher candidates scored the Michigan submissions, and the creative and professional writing majors scored the Pennsylvania pieces. With two sets of scores, which they had developed in groups, the class convened to discuss and compare. After discussion, the college students each used an individual student response device, or "clicker," to assign a new score; these scores were automatically tallied into rankings around which the class eventually came to consensus. Then, each initial group of three composed responses to the middle school writers to whom they had originally been assigned and posted this feedback to each writer's wiki personal page. Afterwards, the college students wrote individual reflections on the entire process.

In what follows, we thus draw on several sources of evidence in our examination of how the second round of the Promising Young Writers revision pilot surfaced teacher candidates' assumptions about the roles, relationships, and responses available to them in responding to student writing. First, we make use of data from some of the student writers' submissions, summarizing when possible (to preserve confidentiality), but also quoting to show the craft and content of the work to which teacher candidates responded. Second, we address the three sets of scores assigned by future teachers and by creative and professional writing majors to each group of middle school writers (an initial set, a set after switching groups, and a final set tallied by clickers); we also draw on anecdotal evidence from class discussions of these scores (and the similarities and differences among them). Third, we analyze the actual feedback the groups posted to the wiki for each student writer. Throughout our analysis, we include excerpts from the reflections composed by the college students at the end of the process. In addition, one middle school student's writing, in particular, serves as a provocative point of intersection across the stages of this process.

2 These authors are represented in two of the required texts for the course, *The Norton Book of Composition Studies*, and *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies.*

Reframing Responses to Student Writing

Paper Jellyfish and Raisin-y Babies: Initial Perceptions of Student Submissions

Ted was surprised by the remarkable quality of the writing from the Pennsylvania students. Students submitted detective fiction, dream sequences, fantasy and futuristic fiction, as well as sophisticated memoirs. For example, one student, Grace, from whose text we have permission to quote, submitted a memoir about adjusting to moving and to changes in her family. Her text demonstrates originality and humor as well as trust in her readers.

> Everyone loved [baby brother]. When we brought him home from the hospital a bunch of people came to see the bright blue eyed baby boy with a crop of pale blond hair and my exhausted mother. Ignoring me in the process, naturally. Just like people always had since they had brought [younger sister] home from the hospital when she was a baby. I didn't care for hospitals. That's where all the babies came from. Some babies were cute and very pretty to look at and adore, like dolls. Others had red, raisin-y, faces and cried too much. They smelled especially undesirable when they needed changing. I never quite understood why my mother loved babies so much. Still don't.

She also demonstrated excellent control of syntax in constructing a sophisticated authorial voice: "Later, when I got to Pennsylvania it was still hot but there it was very humid. Sticky hot. Hard- to- breathe- in my- chest hot. Help me, the sun is beating down on me to kill me hot." Most of the texts from this group revealed students who seemed to enjoy writing and who were writing to engage and entertain their readers, not just to earn the approval of a teacher. One student created adult characters of all of the other students in the group and wrote a fictional story of a class reunion gone awry. Another piece ended with a sophisticated reprisal of a beautifully described image from an arts festival of handcrafted jellyfish with candles inside floating up into an evening sky. As one college student would later write in a reflection on the experience,

> Some of [the students' stories]...I could never think of even if I tried. [One] boy wrote a science fiction short story in which he made up words and mentioned hilarious details that made me chuckle. One writer played well with dialogue and demonstrated its importance in storytelling in general. Another writer used absolutely stunning imagery and captured a scene that I can picture looking at through a photograph from a polaroid camera. In all, Pennsylvania demonstrated some excellent storytelling.

The overall quality of the student writing would, we hoped, reframe teacher candidates' idea of what eighth grade writers are capable of, and encourage them to respond to these students as "real writers."

Fall from Grace: Scoring Student Submissions

Despite our perception of the quality of the student writing (especially from the PA group), the second surprise in this round of judging came when the rankings for the Pennsylvania writers from the group of future teachers were in some instances nearly reversed from what we would have given. The future teachers' highest-ranked submission had been ranked near the bottom by Ted. Ted's highest-ranked submission, which included the beautiful image of candle-lit paper jellyfish floating into the evening sky, had been ranked 6th by future teachers. The submission from Grace, which Ted had ranked second-highest had been ranked 8th of 10 by future teachers. Ted wondered whether the difference in rankings had resulted from his graduate training as a creative writer, rather than a secondary teacher educator: perhaps teacher candidates were judging based on a different frame for what makes good writing, and of their responsibilities as teachers to foster certain kinds of writing.

In response, and to see whether or not the rankings would differ, Ted reassigned the groups so that future teachers scored the Michigan students, and creative and professional writing majors scored the Pennsylvania students. Although professional and creative writing students arrived at rankings similar to what the future teachers had, Grace's text was a notable exception on which we focus further attention below.

In subsequent class discussions, many of the college students reported that their rankings had been influenced by what seemed to them "appropriate" for school, or that they had rewarded texts that presented "good" values over those that demonstrated sophisticated craft but may have challenged traditional ways of thinking. Grace's text, for example, was ranked lower because of her use of sentence fragments and because many had found her cheeky style in some ways inappropriate. These responses to Grace's text suggested a framing of the role of teacher as moral authority charged with correcting not only a student's sentence structure, but also the respectfulness of her tone (regardless of the rhetorical situation). Thus though many of the college students had faulted their previous writing instructors for not valuing their work as writers or thinkers, and instead, for imposing invisible criteria upon their work and viewing their texts as only the products of students completing writing assignments, many had done exactly that to these promising young writers' texts. Despite their dissatisfaction with the feedback they had received as students, those experiences had powerfully framed their sense of their role as teachers responding to these students' writing.

Ted reviewed with the class the instructions for judges (included as Appendix 1) that encouraged them to look for

the ability to "inform and/or move an audience through control of language" and to avoid "applying formulaic standards." As many college students began to realize that they had overvalued correctness or imposed formulaic standards, students from both groups wanted to start over and score all of the submissions again so that they could this time treat these texts as the thoughtfully created products of active young thinkers and writers. A creative writing student approached Ted saying that when he was in middle school, a contest like this would have really mattered to him, and that he might have been dissuaded from continuing by the judgment arrived at by our class. A future teacher worried that, whereas we were supposed to be creating an opportunity outside of school for students to invest themselves into kinds of writing they most wanted to do, in fact, we were imposing school-based notions of what qualified as good writing rather than responding to the texts as we encountered them. As she later wrote in her reflection about the project:

> Assig[n]ing a writer one and only one number was difficult to do, especially when I had the mindset of of [sic] having to grade it according to the genre. (I thought that's why the genres were provided, so that we can assess how well that writer worked within that genre). I wish I would have had a different mindset than that from the get go....

As this comment indicates, many of the teacher candidates had framed the task of scoring and responding as an evaluation of the writer's execution of a generic form, on which the teacher was an expert. However, when confronted with the differences among their scores, and the different perspectives offered by their classmates, they began to realize that another frame was possible.

To reassess the students' submissions, Ted assigned the class to individually rank again any submission that had been considered in the top six by either group. To do this, the college students used individual student response devices ("clickers"), rather than group consensus, to arrive at initial rankings. The clickers automatically tallied individual scores, calculating the top five from each group, and then the class scored the top five against each other again to arrive at a final ranking. Ted again offered the class the opportunity to argue for or against the results arrived at through the clickers, but all seemed satisfied that our final results reflected the collective judgment of the group.

Table 1
Initial and Final Rankings by the Groups

Pennsylvania				Michigan			
Student	Future Teacher Ratings	Creative and Prof. Writers' Ratings	Final Rating with Clickers	Student	Future Teacher Ratings	Creative and Prof. Writers' Rating	Final Rating with Clickers
A	**8th**	**2nd**	2nd	N	13th	12th	
B	10th	10th		O	12th	9th	
C	**3rd**	**3rd**	3rd	P	**2nd**	**8th**	3rd
D	**1st**	**1st**	Tie-4th	Q	**6th**	**5th**	5th
E	7th	8th		R	9th	11th	
F	9th	9th		S	10th	10th	
G	**4th**	**7th**	Tie-4th	T	**8th**	**6th**	
H	**6th**	**6th**	1st	U	**4th**	**7th**	
I	5th	4th		V	**7th**	**2nd**	2nd
J	**2nd**	**5th**		W	**1st**	**1st**	1st
K				X	**5th**	**3rd**	4th
L				Y	11th	13th	
M				Z	**3rd**	**4th**	

Note: Scores in bold are those that differed between the two groups, or from first to final ranking.

Several changes from the initial to the final scores are worth noting for what they suggested about how this experience reframed the college students' sense of what makes good writing, and what roles, relationships, and responses are available to a teacher-reader of student writing. The text in the Pennsylvania group originally ranked highest by both groups, was ranked tied for fourth in the final tally. Students reported that in their original scoring they had valued it highly because of the heart-warming and reaffirming (appropriate) content, but upon review, it did not demonstrate the level of craft evident in many of the other texts. As one college student wrote in her reflection: "I think that our group ending up choosing the 'safe' ones (that were actually rather generic) because we thought that they did the best job within that genre." The sophisticated memoir with the image of jellyfish floating in the sky went from sixth to first when judges focused on craft and approached it as respectful readers rather than enforcers of predictable tropes and gestures.

Grace's text, which the instructor and the professional and creative writers had admired initially, was ranked second of

the group in the final score. One teacher candidate reflected, "I admired her voice, but [initially]...I dubbed it as 'too random' or 'not strong'. However, after reading it a second time...I noticed the craft in her language. She had a sarcastic, comedic voice which was absolutely appropriate to the material she wrote about—that life throws annoying things at us that we have no control over." These changes in scores, and the accompanying comments from their reflections, indicate a change in teacher candidates' framing of the teacher's role and the possibilities for response available to them as readers of student writing. Whereas they initially seemed to frame the teacher as regulator of the generic appropriateness of students' content and language, their later scores and comments suggested more attention to sophistication and the rhetorical effectiveness of the writer's craft at accomplishing her purpose.

On the day the class arrived at consensus for the final ranking of middle schooler's texts, Ted overheard one future teacher tell another that she couldn't believe that she might have gone into a classroom without first having had an important experience like this one. Future teachers also reported in their reflections how important it was for them to have experienced slipping into evaluating students' texts in ways they themselves had resented and had felt were unhelpful to them, and then going back to re-experience the middle schoolers' texts as readers rather than evaluators before scoring them as artifacts of invested writers. "Just like students who are exposed more to writing write better, teachers who are exposed more to students' work assess better. It is so important for me to know how to give good feedback to my students. I feel like this project helped to prepare me for this task as a teacher, but I wish I had been exposed to more projects like this before now." This future teacher recognizes how her prior experiences framed her sense of the teacher's role and how she encountered the students' texts, as well as how the Promising Young Writer's pilot provided opportunities to reframe the evaluation of student writing.

Between Roles: Attempts at Providing Feedback

After the scoring of submissions, Ted asked the initial groups of three to compose feedback to each middle school writer and post it to the wiki. This final stage of the process was an opportunity to put into practice the idea that the goal of providing feedback was to encourage writers in their development, to recognize particular strengths and features of a text, and also to motivate writers to continue to revise. However, rereading middle schoolers' texts and recognizing what was laudable in them did not automatically allow future teachers to produce feedback likely to promote growth or development. Though re-ranking the texts helped to reframe college students' encounters with those texts, and although their attempts at providing feedback revealed progress in applying concepts from course reading, the feedback the groups offered indicated that many of them were still struggling to reimagine their roles as responders. To one middle schooler's personal narrative, a group of future teachers offered the following feedback:

> We thought that you wrote a very heartwarming story, which made us genuinely happy. One of the writing techniques that we really enjoyed was your ability to reflect on the thoughts you were having as a five-year-old, now that you're in 8th grade. For example.... It takes courage to write about a personal experience, and you did it very eloquently. Your piece was very organized and easy to follow. Something that you could think about if you are to continue working on this piece is incorporating more descriptive language to paint a more vivid picture of your experience. Overall, we thought this was a wonderful example of a personal narrative and you should definitely continue writing.

The first half of this response focused on the teachers' reactions as readers to specific techniques the writer had used. However, the second half was still tinged with evaluations of how effectively the writer executed the genre of the personal narrative. One teacher candidate noted in her reflection the difficulty in reconciling these two frames for responding to writing. "I think this was a good experience for me because I need practice switching between evaluating as a teacher and evaluating as a fellow reader. Up until college, I read things as a peer but the [education] major has really changed my ways of looking at things, and it's hard to revert back to a persona you left behind when you entered the major." This future teacher also recognized the challenges and benefits of the Promising Young Writer's pilot for reframing the evaluation of student writing. However, the roles of teacher and fellow reader, for her, remained in opposition.

In addition, some of the creative writers sometimes seemed to forget the audience for the feedback they offered. For example, one group wrote: "You exercise a wealth of creativity. Your attempt to mimic the chaotic nature of a dream sequence is evident through abstract and surreal imagery.... Though this is a dream-like piece, this piece could serve well to explain the context of the world in a way which serves as a bridge between reality and the dream. This would make this piece more accessible for the reader." Though the feedback was positive and might give the writer a sense of accomplishment, the syntax alone would make it challenging to use this response to continue to revise the text. Indeed, the tone suggested that the college students were more concerned with framing themselves as sophisticated readers than with making their comments accessible to eighth grade writers.

Future teachers generally proved more adept than creative and professional writing majors at enacting the role of enthusiastic readers and offering specific feedback. Whereas in the original scoring, creative and professional writers seemed to more readily recognize the sophistication and craft in some of the stronger texts, when it came to responding, groups composed of future teachers typically responded more adeptly as readers rather than authority figures. But the group that provided the most effective feedback was comprised of both future teachers and creative writers. To a futuristic fiction piece, this group responded: "We found your story to be engaging and exciting. You gave a compelling account of a man trying to escape [...] by focusing on the man's actions, and keeping the action of your story fast-paced. The details of description about the man gave us a sense

of his emotions; we were able to connect with him and experience his fear. We particularly enjoyed the ending. The decision to end the story with Dan's demise was excellent. It was a brave choice, and added finality to the tale which would not have been possible had he escaped." Though they offer no advice for revision, the specific praise and the weighing of alternatives in this response provided the writer with a sense of the text's potential effects on his readers. This comment framed the responder's role not as expert evaluator of the genre, but rather as expert reader who can help the author appreciate the rhetorical effectiveness of certain techniques. Thus, in the examples above, teacher candidates' initial attempts at providing feedback, though imperfect, bode well for their future effectiveness.

"Eye-Opening": Reflections on Theory and Practice

In their reflections, future teachers also commented explicitly on how the Promising Young Writers pilot related to their previous experiences with the theories and practices of writing pedagogies. One future teacher wrote: "I feel like one of the biggest flaws in my college education to become an educator is that I have not been given more experience assessing student work. We're taught all of the theories about how to do pre-, formative, and summative assessment, but we haven't been given the opportunity to actually put the theories of assessing into work. Getting the chance to finally interact with and evaluate student work was an eye-opening experience." For this teacher candidate, as for many in Ted's class, our Promising Young Writers revision pilot was her first opportunity to respond to the writing of actual students. Her comment suggested it was also a chance to implement theories of student assessment that had heretofore been abstractions. At the beginning of the semester for the writing pedagogies class, this student's reflections and contributions to class discussion suggested that her interactional frame for enacting the role of responder to student writing was highly formalist--she intende to thoroughly mark the lexical features of her students' texts so that they could see and correct their errors. She had an excellent grasp of the mechanics of language, and was grateful to the teachers she felt had helped her achieve that by marking her texts. She had thoughtfully engaged with the theories provided in the writing pedagogies class, which offered her alternative visions of her role as a writing teacher, but it was in her evaluations of students' texts (and in discussing those evaluations with others), as well as in composing feedback to post to the wiki, that she was able to realize the practical value of what she had learned mostly theoretically to this point.

Another teacher candidate offered a more plaintive reflection along the same lines: "I wish that Bloomsburg would make a course based off of students' work for the sake of future teachers. How am I supposed to prepare myself to correct [*sic*] students' work as a future teacher when I have never had to do it before until now?" These comments suggested not only the value of the Promising Young Writer's pilot as an opportunity to connect theories of assessment to teaching practices, but also how challenging it can be for English educators to provide such opportunities for reframing response to student writing.

Discussion

In the preceding sections, we have addressed the problem of how to provide opportunities for teacher candidates to practice giving feedback on student writing in ways that both challenge their assumptions about their roles as teachers and also help them to connect theory to practice. One such opportunity arose from our piloted revision to the Promising Young Writers program, for which Mike serves as chair of the national committee, and for which college students in Ted's writing pedagogies course served as judges during one round of the contest. Above, we have analyzed how evidence from this experience contributed to reframing the interaction of teacher response to student writing. That evidence included examples of middle school students' writing, as well as the scores, discussions, and written feedback Ted's class generated in response to the writers' submissions. The difference between evaluations and feedback from college students of different majors, as well as the difference between their initial and final scores, suggested that the Promising Young Writers revision pilot provided opportunities to challenge assumptions about the roles, relationships, and responses available to teacher-readers of student writing. Below, we discuss these findings in relation to prior research on English writing teacher education.

"Good" and "Appropriate": Framing Response as Regulation

Teacher candidates in Ted's class initially assigned low scores to some of the middle school submissions we felt were strong pieces. Their comments in discussions and in their reflections indicated that their evaluations were based less on craft and more on the writer's execution of a genre or the appropriateness of her tone. This evidence suggests that the teacher candidates' were operating from an interactional frame in which the teacher's role is that of expert evaluator, and response to student writing is an assessment of generic and moral appropriateness. Prior studies have suggested that teacher feedback can be an attempt to "regulate" student writing based on "genre and mode rules" (Haswell 2006) and on conceptions of students as represented by their writing (Murphy and Yancey 2008; Taylor 2002). Our experience affirms this previous research and adds that such regulatory practices may stem from the way teacher candidates' prior experiences have framed response to student writing.

"When Others Could See Something Special": Reframing with the Help of Other Perspectives

When future teachers and creative writers in Ted's class rescored student submissions, their evaluations of some texts (like Grace's) differed. After discussion and rescoring, teacher candidates' evaluations changed. Other students' different rankings of the texts, especially Grace's, helped future teachers to more readily recognize the roles they had unconsciously donned to encounter those texts. Those differences also helped future teachers to revisit the same texts with a different frame offered by the

other students for how to read the writing of middle schoolers as an appreciative audience. The Promising Young Writers' texts, and the experience of reading them differently, seemed a particularly important opportunity for future teachers to benefit from the presence of other students. As one teacher candidate put it, "Seeing some of the differences in evaluations, make[s] me nervous for when I am a teacher. I would hate to think that a piece of work wouldn't get the recognition deserved because I was not particularly captivated by the writing when others could see something very special in it." In short, hearing others' perspectives contributed to reframing the teacher's role and the responses available to them in responding to student writing. Although previous studies (e.g., Bush 2002; Tulley 2013) have found that competing agendas from Composition Studies and English education in a writing pedagogies course like ours can lead to tensions and disunity, our findings suggest that there are benefits to having students from different majors react differently to the theories and practices presented in the course.

Students as "Real Writers": Connecting Theory and Practice

Although teacher candidates, like most students in Ted's class, had reacted vociferously against accounts of formalist writing pedagogies in course readings from Composition theory, they admitted in discussions and in their reflections that their initial responses to the middle schoolers had applied similar practices to the students' writing. This disconnect between theory and practice echoes other experiences we (and others) have had with future teachers in the writing pedagogies class (e.g., Alsup 2001; Bush 2002), who often ask, "But will it work with real students?" (Alsup and Bush 2003). Though exploration of how to offer effective feedback has been an important aspect of the writing pedagogy course, not until Ted's class had the opportunity to respond to actual student texts through the addition to the course of the Promising Young Writer's pilot, were they able to put into practice the concepts and principles from the course material. More important, they had the opportunity to clearly recognize that the theories they were encountering could be applied to actual texts from actual students in the future. Previous research has suggested that field experiences are often separated from university coursework (e.g., Smagorinsky and Whiting 1995), and that when discussions of strategies for commenting on student writing appear in writing pedagogies courses they may be confined to the abstract (Tulley 2013). Based on our experience with the Promising Young Writers pilot, we argue that concrete experiences with an audience of "students as *real writers*" (Tobin, 2) may be important to reframing future teachers' conceptions of what is possible for teachers of writing.

Boundaries and Limitations

In addressing the disconnect between theory and practice in our teacher candidates' initial responses to student writing, and the possibilities for reframing their sense of the teacher's role afforded by the Promising Young Writers revision pilot, we do not mean to reinforce a dichotomy between theory and practice. Nor do we suggest that the inclusion of writing by actual students would "fix" the difficulties encountered by instructors of writing pedagogies courses. Indeed, responding initially to the middle schoolers' writing, alone, was not enough to reframe teacher candidates' conception of their role or the responses available to them as teachers. Some researchers (e.g., Grossman 2000; Smagorinsky, Cook, and Johnson 2003) have found that classroom experience can cause beginning teachers to forsake the principles they learned in teacher methods courses and revert back to more traditional practices for teaching writing; likewise, Smagorinsky and Johnson (2013) has suggested that, far from challenging their prior experiences, fieldwork during teacher preparation can sometimes encourage teacher candidates to assimilate. We make no claims about the future effectiveness of these teachers as responders to student writing, but we emphasize that the thoughtful integration of practical experience with an audience of student writers and discussion of composition theories and pedagogies is what allowed for our students to reframe response to student writing.

The college students' prior experiences with writing instruction were not the only influence on their frame for responding to the texts submitted by the middle schoolers. We acknowledge that the nature of the contest, itself, may have contributed to their judgments about the appropriateness of content and form. Their role as judges, and the requirement of ranking students, likely contributed to the initial framing of their responses. Indeed, one of the teacher candidates wrote in her reflection that she had understood the inclusion of a genre label on a list of the students' submissions as an invitation to evaluate their execution of a generic form. On the other hand, the nature of the three rounds in our piloted revision to the Promising Young Writers program, and the instructions for college students to respond in the second round, suggested the importance of revision for particular audiences, and encouraged responders to assist writers in their development and to recognize particular strengths and features of a text. In class, Ted reminded college students of their role as judges and *not* teachers, and his invitations to reexamine the middle schoolers' submissions certainly implied his own values as a reader of student writing. That college students noted and reacted to both types of influences in their responses to student writing only reinforces for us the way classroom discourse--including assignments, instructions, and teacher feedback--can contribute to framing (and reframing) responses to student writing.

Finally, while we continue to recognize the potential advantages for writers of providing them with real audiences outside the classroom (e.g. Pascopella and Richardson 2009), our efforts to use real external audiences did not spur the focus on revision we were hoping to see during each stage of the Promising Young Writers project. In part, logistical challenges of coordinating classrooms at three institutions limited the time middle schoolers had to revise their texts based on feedback from their peers in a different state. In most cases, college students had already completed scoring before peers had provided comments or voted. Also, though college students did provide feedback that could have potentially motivated middle schoolers to revisit their texts and revise in earnest, with the idea that the text had been considered seriously and was about to go to the next level to

a "famous" author, little or no revision was evident on the wiki. It is possible that middle schoolers found confusing the prospect that they should revise a text that had been read enthusiastically by college students. It is also possible that middle school teachers were not in position to devote class time to helping middle schoolers reframe their experience of receiving feedback from college students in ways that may have helped them to act upon that feedback in revising their texts. However valuable the Promising Young Writers experience may have been for teacher candidates, its potential value to the middle schoolers involved seems much less clear.

Implications

Teacher candidates' comments during discussions and in their reflections suggested that their prior experiences had powerfully framed writing teaching as the evaluation of generic form and content. While this may not be surprising in the era of standardized testing, one student's comments suggested that she needed practice "switching between evaluating as a reader and evaluating as a teacher" because it was "hard to revert back to a persona you left behind when you entered the [education] major." What other experiences before, during, and after writing teacher education might contribute to framing writing instruction as a regulatory practice? What reframing experiences might English educators provide to teacher candidates? How might one measure the effectiveness of those reframing experiences?

In Ted's writing pedagogies class, the dual audience of teacher candidates and creative writers provided a useful opportunity to compare different perspectives on the submissions to the Promising Young Writer's contest. However, we recognize that the competing agendas of college writing, rhetoric and composition, and English education present many other challenges to instructors of a writing pedagogies course. We, ourselves, continue to explore possibilities for a section of the course created exclusively for future teachers, which could focus more precisely on the needs of these students and could potentially provide them more field experience opportunities than does the current, primarily theoretical, course designed to support future teachers, creative writing majors, and professional writing minors. Who are the various college student audiences for the writing pedagogies course? How do those audiences frame the interaction of response to writing? What other opportunities (like the one afforded by our piloted revision to the Promising Young Writers program) might allow instructors to bring those audiences' different frames for response to writing into useful relationship?

For many, if not all of the teacher candidates in Ted's class (some of whom were about to graduate from college and begin student teaching), this was their first opportunity to bring theories of writing pedagogy into relationship with the practices of evaluating and responding to actual student writing. Although we know many wonderful teachers who continue to read theory to inform themselves and to modify and adopt practices that seem promising, we have also witnessed, during professional development presentations to secondary teachers or college faculty, how challenging it can be for teachers who have clearly defined their roles within the interactional frame for response to student writing to reframe those roles and to break long-established habits of response. What earlier reframing experiences might we offer to teacher candidates during teacher preparation? How might the opportunities we provide to beginning and to more established teachers differ? In short, what experiences might we offer (and when) to help teachers at different stages of their careers to reframe response to student writing?

Conclusion

In this article, we have addressed the problem of how to provide English teacher candidates with opportunities to practice giving feedback on student writing which surface and challenge their assumptions about the roles, relationships, and responses available to them as teachers. Our pilot revision to NCTE's Promising Young Writers program, for which Mike chairs the national committee, provided such an opportunity for Ted's writing pedagogies class, as college students evaluated and responded to writing from middle schoolers in Michigan and Pennsylvania. To the scores, the discussions, and the reflections from Ted's students, we applied analyses that drew on the concept of the interactional frame: the definition of an interaction (like teacher response to student writing) that shapes and is shaped by participation in other, similar situations. Our analyses suggested that teacher candidates initially approached responding to student writing as evaluators of the appropriateness of form and content, framing the interaction as regulatory practice. The difference between their initial scores and those of their creative and professional writing classmates helped the future teachers begin to reframe response to student writing. Their participation in the Promising Young Writers revision pilot also provided the students in the writing pedagogies course with a valuable opportunity to connect theory and practice. Research remains to be done on what kinds of experiences before, during, and after English teacher preparation might contribute to framing (and reframing) response to student writing for teachers at various stages of their careers.

Appendix 1

NCTE PROMISING YOUNG WRITERS PROGRAM

INSTRUCTIONS FOR JUDGING STUDENT WRITING

ROLE OF THE JUDGES

The National Council of Teachers of English thanks you for the time and interest you are devoting to this program. Without your support, this program could not be offered to students, teachers, and schools. The role of judges in selecting outstanding eighth-grade writers is paramount. Students may receive special attention from their local schools, state and national officials, and NCTE state affiliates. NCTE recognizes each student with Certificates of Recognition or Participation and their names and school are posted on the NCTE website. It is very important for judges to meet the deadline so schools can be notified in time for end-of-the-year awards ceremonies.

JUDGING PROCESS

Each team of two judges will work independently to evaluate the same students' papers (Best Writing and Themed Writing for each student). **Score** each paper between 0 and 3 based on the criteria which follow (that is, one score for each Best Writing and one score for each Theme Writing). **Record** the scores for the two writings from each student.

EVALUATING THE WRITING SAMPLES[3]

In evaluating the two pieces of writing (described below), judges should consider the effectiveness of each piece for its intended audience. The comprehensive question is whether the writer exhibits power to inform and/or move an audience through control of language. Fuzziness should not be mistaken for profundity, nor mechanical sloppiness for originality. Although editorial correctness is a virtue, meaningful variations should be allowed and the absence of mechanical error should not be overvalued. As a rule, flawed brilliance is to be preferred over correct dullness.

Best Writing Evaluation: Judges have the opportunity to read a wide variety of writings students have chosen as their best. More than one poem or prose work will be accepted as long as the entry does not exceed ten pages. We do not accept research papers, novels, or novelettes. A judge may ask, "How can I compare the relative worth of a poem and an essay?" The only honest answer is that one cannot. Yet the piece of writing may be judged in terms of itself and how it compares to the writing evaluation rubric. (It is possible to adapt the descriptions in the rubric to submissions in various genres/media.) The major question to ask is whether the sample, whatever its type, reveals high achievement in writing for a student at this grade level. In many instances, the best writing samples will have been examined by a committee of teachers, or a committee of teachers and students, who have judged the writings of these students. A teacher's corrections or remarks should not be on the paper.

Themed Writing Evaluation: Judges have the opportunity to evaluate writing done on the same topic. Judges are reminded that this writing is done by eighth-grade students, and their responses to the assigned topic may not be the equivalent of those written by more mature writers. However, having one composition on the same topic by each participating student does provide a point of comparison not only between that individual student's two submissions but also across all the writings being evaluated.

HOLISTIC WRITING EVALUATION

Use the Holistic Writing Evaluation Scale below to score papers. Scores of 3 and 2 should be reserved for those writings that are clearly outstanding and that could be printed in a magazine or local newspaper as representing the best junior high/middle school writing in the state. However, it is possible that judges may select a winner who is not equally good on both writing samples.

To recognize varied achievement, judges are urged to:

1. **Read supportively in order to reward students for what they have accomplished.** Eighth graders include a wide range of writers, including English Language Learners, all of whom are developing their writing in different ways.

2. **Avoid applying formulaic standards** (for instance, insisting that compositions follow a specific essay format such as the five-paragraph paper; or that one kind of error is automatically disqualifying [*e.g.,* "alot" rather than "a lot," or English Language Learners' errors in the use of the articles *a*, *an*, *the*]).

3. **Recognize that a 3, like other ratings, represents a range, not a pinnacle**—high achievement, not flawlessness—and must therefore be used ungrudgingly if those who deserve to be winners are going to get the score necessary to qualify them.

3 *Note that while these instructions for the national program address two writing samples (a themed and a "best writing") for each student, in our piloted revision we asked for only one best writing sample.*

NCTE PROMISING YOUNG WRITERS PROGRAM
HOLISTIC WRITING EVALUATION SCALE

Submissions that receive a 3, 2, or 1 should meet a certain level of effectiveness with regard to organization, content, style, usage, and writing process. Submissions that do not meet this level should receive a 0.

3 Submissions scored as a 3 tend to employ an organizational framework that is especially effective for the topic/genre. The content is particularly effective throughout the piece because of its substance, specificity, or illustrative quality. The work is vivid and precise, with distinguishing characteristics that give the writing an identity of its own within the conventions of the genre/medium, though it may contain an occasional flaw. The work is polished and impressive for the eighth grade.

2 Submissions scored as a 2 are organized effectively for the topic/genre. The content is effective throughout the piece, though the paper may lack the substance, specificity, or illustrative quality of a 3. The stylistic/surface features of the genre/medium are consistently under control, despite occasional lapses. The potential in the writing is realized, though not to the degree that further revision would allow.

1 Submissions scored as a 1 show evidence of the writer's attempt at organization. Content, though effective, tends to be less consistent or less substantive, specific, and illustrative than that found in papers scored as a 3 or 2. The writer generally observes the stylistic conventions of genre/medium but unevenness suggests that the writer is not yet in full command of his/her voice. Some errors are usually present, but they aren't severe enough to interfere significantly with the reader's experience. The potential in the writing is evident, but the work would clearly benefit from further revision.

0 Submissions scored as a 0 either do not meet the requirements for consideration, or do not achieve an acceptable level for one or more of the criteria above. The organization of the work is not effective for the topic/genre; or the content lacks substance, specificity, and illustrative value; or the writer does not observe the conventions of the genre/medium in ways that do not seem consistent (vs. variations from standard written English that are intentional or associated with a dialect or with ELL writing); or the amount of errors interferes significantly with the reader's experience. The writing requires substantial revision.

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First-Year Composition and the Common Core: Educating Teachers of Writing Across the High School-College Continuum

T/W

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An effort is now underway in America's public schools to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS); these assessment standards seek to align K-12 exit standards with college level entrance requirements, thereby producing high school graduates that are, according the architects of the CCSS, "College and Career Ready." This article will discuss the implications of the CCSS on the teaching of writing instructors at the college level. I will argue that, with the nationwide adoption of the CCSS, the most effective models of the training of writing teachers in higher education will now include collaboration with educators at the K-12 level; I will also offer a model for this kind of collaborative work, based on an effort I am currently leading as the Director of English Composition at my institution. I will begin with a brief overview of the CCSS, and the shifts in the teaching and learning of English Language Arts at the K-12 level they suggest. I will then suggest a model for teaching teachers of first year composition, based on recent collaborative efforts with high school teachers and administrators involved in my institution's Concurrent Enrollment Program. Specifically, I will discuss how this collaborative model can help us understand the strengths and weaknesses of beginning college writers, from the perspectives of both high school *and* college teachers, and how this understanding should then inform our instruction of first-year composition teachers. Finally, I will suggest that it is essential that the education of secondary and post-secondary writing teachers be grounded in current theories and practices of the field of composition and rhetoric.

The Common Core State Standards and English Language Arts: Background and Shifts

The Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governor's Association jointly initiated the Common Core State Standards, and began work on the standards in 2009 (Common Core Background). A final draft of the CCSS was published in June 2010. According to the official website of the CCSS, sponsored by the CCSSO and the NGA, the CCSS, "define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs" (About the Standards). The CCSS set standards of "College and Career Readiness" only for English Language Arts and Mathematics, although they establish literacy standards for science, technical subjects and social studies in grades 6-12 (ELA Standards). As of the middle of 2013, 45 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the standards.

The CCSS for ELA suggest several significant shifts in standards for language arts in K-12; these shifts that will impact the way that literacy is taught and learned across the K-16 continuum. As the purpose of this article is not to provide an analysis of these shifts, only a brief discussion of these shifts is necessary, in order to establish context for the discussion. According to Student Achievement Partners, a non-profit founded by the chief architect of the CCSS, David Coleman, these shifts can be reduced to three major changes: 1. "Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction," 2. "Reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational," and 3. "Regular practice with complex text and its academic language" (Common Core Shifts). Of these shifts, the move towards the inclusion of a higher percentage of "informational texts" in the K-12 language arts/English classroom has generated the most controversy. The architects of the CCSS, most visibly David Coleman, argue that students need to spend less time reading and writing narratives (or about narratives), and more time reading and writing what the CCSS terms "informational texts." As T*he New York Times* notes, in the newspaper's account of an incident representative of the controversy over this aspect of the CCSS, Coleman himself ignited a storm of criticism when he argued against the use of personal writing in English classes by saying, that, in the business world, no one ever tells an employee, "Johnson, I need a market analysis by Friday, but before that I need a compelling account of your childhood" (Lewin). The *Times* notes that progressive educators reacted strongly to this comment; this upset is part of a generally negative reaction among progressives[1] and some conservatives[2] to the CCSS emphasis on informational texts over literary texts. An understanding of the major shifts brought about by the CCSS for ELA, how these shifts are presented by the backers of the CCSS, and an awareness of the controversies over those shifts, is particularly essential for those teaching writing in K-12. An understanding of these issues is also important to anyone preparing writing teachers at the college level, as these changes will have an impact on what incoming students know, and don't know, about college writing.

1 See Diane Ravitch's blog, for the progressive perspective on the ELA shifts.
2 See Sandra Stosky's post on the website of the Heritage Institute, for a conservative perspective on the ELA shifts.